

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**SciVerse ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 46 (2012) 3215 – 3219

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCES 2012

Language learning motivation of Turkish tertiary level EFL students

Belgin Sakiroglu^{a*}, Kenan Dikilitas^b^a*Gediz University, İzmir, Turkey*

Abstract

Researchers have helped language teachers understand the various aspects of motivation in foreign language (FL) learning. Motivation is dependent on several factors including, gender, skill level, perceived proficiency and personality traits such as introversion and extroversion. This study explored these multiple dimensions with 129 students at the preparatory level at Gediz University. To do this, the learners responded to a questionnaire adapted from Dörnyei & Guilleaumeaux, (2008). We found significant differences for gender and level factors. Understanding these differences could give teachers a better insight into instructional methods, decision making and encouraging students to achieve higher levels of success.

© 2012 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Selection and/or peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Uzunboylu
Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Keywords: Language learning motivation, proficiency and motivation, gender and motivation, level factors and motivation

1. Introduction

The study of language learning motivation has been popular in the last forty years. It is generally believed to be one of the most important determinants of achievement in L2 learning (Dörnyei, 1994). Researched from multiple perspectives, human motivation is a complex construct that, when linked to the L2 learning process, becomes even more intricate (Dörnyei, 2001). The complex nature of L2 motivation has caused researchers to promulgate a variety of theories and approaches. As a consequence of these studies, it has been suggested that motivation plays an important role in the success of learners. In foreign language learning, there are some significant factors which help researchers to find answers to the question of why some learners of language are more successful than others. According to Gardner and Tremblay (1994), all individual differences affect learners directly. For example, Özek (2000) draws attention to age, gender and year level differences in learners' FL motivation as one of the main issues in her study. These individual differences are highlighted in many models of motivation, which include Gardner, (1985); Dörnyei (1994), and William and Burden (1997).

1.2. Gardner's Socio Educational Model

In 1985, Gardner's model in the area of foreign language learning was first presented. This paradigm dominated L2 motivation research for nearly two decades. Gardner (1985) defines L2 motivation as 'the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity'. In this definition three components are mentioned: effort expended to achieve a goal, a desire to learn the language, and satisfaction with the task of learning the language. To measure the correlation between motivation and proficiency in language learning process, he developed the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), composed of these three sub-scales. Gardner (1985) argues that all three components would be apparent in truly motivated individuals. It is not possible to reflect true motivation if one of them is

*Belgin Sakiroglu. Tel.: +90-232-3550000
E-mail address: belgin_sakiroglu@hotmail.com

missing. For him, a learner deemed highly motivated will enjoy learning the language, want to learn the language and strive to learn the language.

1.3. Multi-Level Model

Dörnyei constructed his own model which is a more general framework of L2 motivation. Dörnyei sustains that “Motivation in L2 is an eclectic, multifaceted construct” (Dörnyei, 1994:279). According to him, motivation includes three main levels: the Language Level, the Learner Level and the Learning Situation Level (Dörnyei, 1994). The Language Level involves the Gardnerian types of motivation in that it refers to the orientation and power of motivation relating to aspects of the L2 itself. It can be described by the two broad subsystems of instrumental and integrative orientations (Dörnyei, 1994). The second level of the motivational construct is the Learner Level, which refers to individual characteristics that the learner brings to the learning process (Dörnyei, 2001). There are two components of this level: need for achievement and self-confidence. Need for achievement is a personality feature, which is present in every aspect of the individual’s life and therefore it is involved in language learning as well (Oxford and Shearin, 1994). The second component of this level is self-confidence, which refers to the learner’s belief in his/her ability to accomplish a given task. This component is further divided into four subsections: language use anxiety, perceived L2 competence, attributions about past experiences, and self-efficacy (Dörnyei, 1994a: 280). The third level of the model, the Learning Situation Level, is concerned with three aspects of language learning within a classroom setting. Dörnyei (2001) lists these three subtitles as:

- Course-specific motivational components (interest, relevance, expectancy, satisfaction)
 - Teacher-specific motivational components (affiliative motive, authority type, modeling, task presentation, feedback)
 - Group-specific motivational components. (goal-orientedness, reward system, group cohesiveness, classroom goal structure.
- With reference to this level, a framework is provided by Crookes and Schmidt (1991) based on Keller’s work.

1.3. Social Constructivist Model

Williams and Burden (1997) introduce the constructivist approach to learning within a cognitive framework. In Williams and Burden’s (1997) framework of motivation of language learning, motivation is separated under two main dimensions. The first division deals with the arousal of curiosity and optimal degree of challenge. The perceived value of the activity is related to the learners’ inner experiences. Personal relevance, anticipated value of outcomes and intrinsic value attributed to the activity become important. The next stage, sense of agency, is directly related with the locus of causality. It therefore includes a factor, which is very important in explaining a student’s school performance. The mastery stage is about learners’ feelings of competence and their self-efficacy. Another aspect, self-concept, is composed of realistic awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses in skills required. In Williams and Burden’s (1997) framework of motivation, attitudes are regarded as one of the main factors of the study. According to them, people have attitudes: a) to language learning in general, b) to the target language, c) to the target language community and culture. In the last part, internal factors, Williams and Burden (1997) point out the significance of individual differences such as age and gender. Williams and Burden (1997) announce the external factors as the second dimension of their framework. They divide these factors into four main headings as: significant others which include the role of parents, teachers and peers as well. The nature of interaction with significant others are rewards and punishments and their effect on the learners’ achievement of language learning. The third point for extrinsic factors is the Learning Environment. They emphasize the effects of physical factors such as; comfort, time of day, size of class and school, class and school ethos. Finally the last part of the framework is concerned with the Broader Context, which includes the concepts of wider family networks, the local education system, cultural norms and societal expectations and attitudes.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection Instrument

‘A Student Motivational State Questionnaire’, adapted from Dörnyei&Guilloteaux (2008), was used in the study. The questionnaire contained 45 questions which are in the form of statements. All the items were closed-ended, and the participants were asked to respond using the Likert scale with 4 points ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’.

2.2. Data analysis

The data obtained from the Motivational State Questionnaire was analyzed with the use of SPSS 10.01 for Windows (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) data editor. First, descriptive statistics were obtained to describe the overall motivational level of the participants. Then, learners were arranged according to their proficiency levels, independent samples t-test and Analyses Of Variance (ANOVA) were applied to compare the means of the participants.

2.2. Participants

The research was conducted at Gediz University located in İzmir. The questionnaires were administered to 129 participants who were attending classes at four proficiency levels, called A1(27), A2(42), B1(27), and B2 (27). There were 48 females and 79 males.

2.3 Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions.

1. Is there a relation between gender and motivation for foreign language learning?
2. Is there a relation between level factors and motivation for foreign language learning?
3. Is there a relation between perceived proficiency and motivation?

3. Findings and Results

Findings for RQ1: Is there a relation between gender and motivation for foreign language learning?

Table 1 shows the difference in means for gender on motivation. In order to analyse the relationship between gender differences and motivational level, an Independent Samples T-test was carried out.

Table 1. The results of the relationship between motivation and gender

Gender	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sd. Error Mean
Males	79	22.541	5.35108	,62205
Females	48	24.638	4.73849	,69118

The result of the analysis revealed a significant difference between male and female learners. According to the results, female learners did have higher levels of motivation in learning English than male learners at the preparatory school of Gediz University.

Table 1.1 Level of Significance

Motivation Score	N	Mean	P- Value
Males	79	3.7173	0.02
Females	48	3.9791	

According to the t-test results, there is a significant difference in motivation between males and females that were identified on the questionnaire as external. On the contrary, no significant difference was found for male and females among those with higher internal motivation ($p=0.125$).

Findings for RQ2: Is there a relation between level factors and motivation for foreign language learning?

Table 2 shows the differences in motivation by achievement levels. It is seen that motivational levels increase as achievement increases, which indicates that learning a foreign language is in itself a driving force in higher achievement.

Table 2. Motivation by achievement levels

Motivation Score	N	Mean
A1	29	3,465517
A2	45	3,566667
B1	27	3,694444
B2	28	3,651786

However, in Table 2.1, the ANOVA analysis does not indicate that this difference is statistically significant. The implications of this analysis will be discussed in the conclusion section.

Table 2.1 Level of significance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Groups	1134,274	3	378,091	1,003	,394
Within Groups	47133,07	125	377,065		
Total	48267,34	128			

Findings for RQ3: Is there a relation between perceived proficiency and motivation for foreign language learning?

Table 3 describes how the learners perceive themselves as their proficiency level goes up. It was obtained from the instruments, addressing the following questionnaire item. ‘I am good at English.’

Table 3. Motivation and perceived proficiency, ‘I am good at English’

Groups	N	True
A1	27	18,5%
A2	45	24,4%
B1	25	32,0%
B2	28	64,3%

Table3.1. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp.Sig. (2sided)
PearsonChi-Square	16,524(a)	6	,011
Likelihood Ratio	16,572	6	,011
Linear-by-Linear	,211	1	,646
N of Valid Cases	,129		

In Table3.1, since the value of ‘Asymp. Sig.’ in ‘Pearson Chi-Square’ cell is less than 0, 05, there is a meaningful relation between perceived proficiency and motivation.

4. Discussion

4.1. Discussion of findings concerning gender and motivation

One of the main assumptions of this study was that female learners would have higher levels of motivation than male learners. This assumption is consistent with the studies of Williams &Burden and Dörnyei. Dörnyei’s research involves 8000 Hungarian students and concluded that male students are less motivated language learners (Dörnyei, 2005). Williams and Burden (1997) mention that girls expressed a significantly higher degree of desire to learn L2 than did the boys and they also put forth more effort to learn the language. The conclusions indicate that female learners at Preparatory school of Gediz University are more motivated than males. In addition, they are more extrinsically motivated. It may be more important for them to show their abilities to others. (i.e, family members, peers and teachers). Bacon and Finneman (1992) reported that, compared to male learners, female learners have strong extrinsic motivation. Ludwig (1983) supports this idea by suggesting that female learners were more extrinsically motivated in his study.

4.2. Discussion of findings concerning level factors and motivation

This study also investigated motivation level of the students in learning English in relation to their proficiency level. Findings show that there is a direct relation between the proficiency level and motivation. As the proficiency levels of the students increase, so do motivational levels of the group. That is, students with the highest proficiency level are likely to be more motivated and assess their skills better than their peers with the lowest proficiency level. This finding is also confirmed in Gardner’s socio-education model of second language acquisition (Gardner, 1985; Gardner& Tremblay, 1994; Gardner, Margaret, Tennant&Mihic, 2004).

4.3. Discussion of findings concerning perceived proficiency and motivation

The findings of the present study revealed the relation between perceived proficiency and motivation. In the *Learner Part* of Dörnyei's Multi-Level Model self-confidence is one of the most crucial aspects that refers to learner's belief in his-her ability to accomplish. As their English Level goes up, they are more aware of their achievement and the learners who have less interrelation with English deem themselves more incompetent. Furthermore, Gardner supports the same idea and claims that the attitudes of learners to learn the language are one of the main sub-scales to measure the correlation between proficiency and motivation.

5. Conclusions

Concerning individual differences, a number of conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, proficiency is a significant factor that affects motivational level of the FL learners. More specifically, learners with high proficiency are more motivated than those with low proficiency. Gardner supports Dörnyei and claims that the attitudes of the learners, the desire and motivational intensity are the sub-scales to measure this correlation. Secondly, learners whose English Learning Levels are high, feel more determined. Third significant factor is gender, which influences motivation. Similar to many studies (Dörnyei, 2005, Williams&Burden, 1997), this study revealed that motivational level of the female learners is higher in FLL. On the other hand, male learners are observed with lower levels of motivation.

References

- Bacon, S., and M. Finneman. (1992). Sex Differences in self-reported beliefs about foreign-language learning and authentic oral and written input. *Language Learning* 42:471-95
- Crookes, G. & Schmit, R. (1991) *Motivation*: Reopening the research agenda language learning 41.
- Dörnyei, Z.(1994).Understanding L2 motivation: On with the challenge. *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol.78, No.iv.
- Dörnyei, Z.(2001). Teaching and researching motivation. *Harlow; Longman*.
- Dörnyei, Z.(2005). The psychology of language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition.*Mahwah, N.J. : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates*.
- Gardner, R.C. (1985). Social psychology and language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R.C., & Tremblay, P.F. (1994). On motivation, research agendas and theoretical frameworks. *Modern Language Journal*, 78 (3), 359-368.
- Gardner, R.C., Masgaret, A.-M., Tennant, J., & Mihic, L. (2004). Integrative Motivation: Changes during a year-long intermediate-level course, *Language Learning*, 54, 1-34.
- Guillateaux, M. J., & Dörnyei, Z., (2008). Motivating Language Learners: A classroom-oriented investigation of the effects of motivational strategies on students' motivation.
- Ludwig, J. (1983). Attitudes and expectations: A profile of female and male students of college French, German and Spanish. *Modern Language Journal* 67: 216-27.
- Oxford, R. L.,& Burden, R. L. (1994). Language learning motivation: Expanding the theoretical framework. *Modern Language Journal*, 78, 12-28.
- Ozek, Y.(2000)The Influence of various Motivational Factors on Language Learning in Turkey.Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Exeter, UK.
- Williams, M,& Burden , R.L. (1997). Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist Approach, Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*.